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National College
for School Leadership

Schools and academies

The opportunities and challenges of all-through leadership

Resource

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Executive summary

Background

All-through schooling has been a feature of the independent sector for a very long time but it is relatively new to the maintained sector. All-through settings such as campus and co-located settings are more common than all-through schools largely because schools are financially disadvantaged by amalgamation. The Consortium of All-Through Schooling (CATS)¹ believes there are in excess of 60 all-through settings in England: among them are federations, collaborations, academies and trusts. At least 35 are all-through academies and at least 7 are all-through schools. The growing interest in all-through education can, in part, be attributed to the drive for personalised learning and the notion that learning at the point of readiness makes more sense than learning by age-related stage. All-through schooling is designed to provide personalised education for a child aged from 2 to 16, or 19, in the same setting. All-through schooling aims to ease the traditional transition process between key stages, early years, primary and secondary education and to manage the entire learning journey for a child in a consistent and developmental way, all within the same institution. What we know very little about is the leadership of all-through institutions. What are the distinctive features of leadership and how might the development of leaders in all-through settings be supported?

Scope

This small-scale research project was completed by the National College and CATS with the aim of fostering a better understanding of the distinctive features of leadership in all-through settings. The research was conducted in 16 settings using face-to-face interviews. Most of the interviews were conducted with the leader, a senior and a middle leader in the same setting. The researchers found a correlation between leadership position and the perspective on leadership. The findings are therefore relevant to the position and perspective of individual respondents. All the data used in this report comes from conversations with school leaders in the 16 settings.

The questions asked were open ended and broad in scope and the responses are therefore equally wide ranging. The report attempts to make sense of these responses in order to a) offer an understanding of the nature of leadership in all-through settings and b) reflect to the readers of the report the issues raised by leaders of all-through institutions.

Purpose

The research looked at the opportunities and challenges facing leaders in all-through settings; the distinctive knowledge, skills and behaviours required of them and the issues that concern them. This report also looks at the work of all-through settings in preparing future leaders and illustrates what all-through leaders see as valuable training and development for succession. The findings identified offer opportunities for reflection.

Findings

The findings are discussed in detail in the main body of this report but a summary is provided below.

Opportunities experienced by all-through leaders

- The benefits for children and young people were regarded as the greatest opportunity for all-through leadership. The impact of the all-through setting is beyond the scope of this research but all respondents could cite good examples of cross-phase learning having a significant positive effect, with the best examples coming from settings where there was proximity between children and young people.
- All-through teaching and learning models were the desired outcome of leading the all-through setting. The development of all-through pedagogy, though difficult to achieve, was regarded as an ideal.
- Cross-phase professional development was seen as a key opportunity for staff within all-through settings where working out of phase and growing confidence were central to equity within the all-through context.

¹ CATS is a national group specialising in the leadership of all-through learning in schools, academies, federations, trusts and collaborations (www.allthroughschooling.org.uk).

Challenges encountered by all-through leaders

- Credibility was a concern for many all-through leaders when leading staff from different phases. This created the challenge of having sufficient knowledge of all phases or at least knowing which questions to ask. Primary-trained leaders were perceived to be less confident in leading all phases.
- Phase-based cultures initially challenged many leaders: the challenge of managing the change process toward an all-through culture was, in this context, seen as daunting.
- Transition presented the greatest challenge to leaders because although managing transition is stated as a benefit of all-through settings, in reality it throws up another set of transition issues.

Skills, knowledge and behaviours needed by all-through leaders

- The vast majority of all-through leaders were clear that the skills needed for all-through leadership were the same as those for leadership of a single school, just more complex and on a bigger scale. One of the skills most frequently identified as essential for all-through leaders was the ability to communicate effectively across all phases; this was seen to rely heavily on emotional intelligence: empathy, communication and interpersonal skills.
- The ability to lead organisational change, a mix of the knowledge required and the skills to do it, was a high priority for all-through leaders.
- Talent-spotting reflected a very genuine need to develop future leaders for all-through settings and was felt to be an essential behaviour of existing leaders in order to provide succession for all-through settings.
- The ways in which current leaders of all-through settings are supporting future leaders is impressive. All the continuing professional development (CPD) systems encountered in the research supported cross-phase working and many had customised training and development packages for aspiring leaders. The more mature settings have links with local universities to support Masters-level qualifications for their staff, indicating a willingness to find local solutions to professional development needs.

Opportunities and challenges for leaders of all-through settings

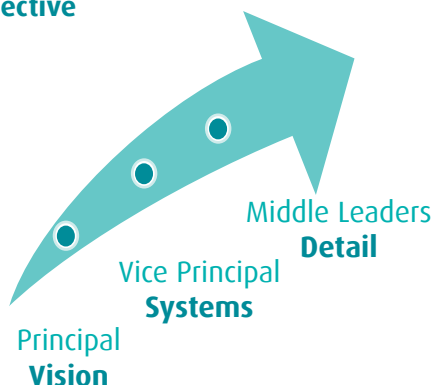
Opportunities

Three perspectives were sought in the research for each of the 16 settings investigated:

- the head, chief executive or principal of the organisation
- someone representing the senior leadership team, such as a vice principal or deputy head
- a middle leader, such as a head of key stage

The responses demonstrate a clear relationship between role and perspective, as illustrated in Figure 1. Demonstrating the development and expansion of the leaders' vision through systems and processes and then through day-to-day delivery, all-through leaders' views consistently mirrored this image. Where the principal, for example, talked about collaborative opportunity, the vice principal typically reflected on transferring effective systems cross-phase and the middle leader talked about the practicalities of teaching and learning in other phases.

Figure 1: Relationship between role and perspective



These findings are consistent with the understanding of the executive head role described in [Achieving excellence in academy leadership](#) (National College, 2011), that they:

'embody and model a highly compelling vision across a number of organisations and/or partners that is widely recognised as transformational and secures the sustained commitment of all.'

National College, 2011:7

Senior leaders responsible for particular aspects of all-through leadership were largely very optimistic about the opportunities presented by all-through schooling. They identified three areas particularly:

- benefits for children and young people
- opportunities created by all-through teaching and learning
- benefits of professional development in an all-through setting

Each of these is discussed below.

Benefits for children and young people

Leaders in all-through settings were secure in their conviction that the benefits for children and young people were significant. They identified a wide range of advantages to learners that could only be delivered in multi-age settings and advantages that were a direct product of the proximity of younger children to older ones:

- Mentoring between year groups was seen to be a route to maturity for older children whilst providing excellent role models for younger pupils.
- The maturation impact for older children was mentioned by some leaders, with buddy schemes being mentioned by others. The provision of work experience within the organisation as part of the curriculum offer was also used as a strategy for pupil-to-pupil mentoring.
- The visibility of all ages in all-through schools supported the sense of continuity and reinforced the concept of a learning journey and a sense of authentic progression.
- Younger children in proximity to older ones were seen as being better supported in their aspirations.
- The all-through setting provided a context in which teachers could get to know children better as they progressed through school.
- The impact on the school's relationship with parents was also commented on, with all-through being seen to 'benefit the families the most because [the school] can intervene at an earlier stage, so that life chances are improved'.

The Dover Federation for the Arts provides real opportunities for work-based placements which benefit students of all ages. Sixth form students use their free study periods to support primary-age children with activities such as reading. A-level art students work alongside primary pupils on shared projects.

Opportunities created by all-through teaching and learning

The research identified some commonly agreed opportunities for teaching and learning in an all-through context whilst simultaneously recognising tensions that traditionally exist between phases.

Some all-through leaders voiced a concern about primary practitioners and a perceived lack of confidence in an all-through setting. Comments such as: 'convincing primary leaders of their worth and their ability to lead an all-through school' featured in the responses received. Yet simultaneously there is significant recognition of how much primary practice has to teach secondary. One senior all-through leader observed: 'primary can influence the curriculum beyond its phase... [by] getting secondary subject specialists to think about and focus on skills-based learning rather than knowledge and content'. This authentic exchange of practice is distinctive to all-through settings. Despite the traditional tension between specialist teaching and experiential learning, the opportunity to develop an awareness of what teaching and learning look like in different phases was regularly seen as a benefit of the all-through setting. In one context, a middle leader group of 60 staff across three all-through schools was seen as 'the powerhouse of developing practice'. The all-through setting was regarded as the place where 'young future leaders [can develop] a deeper understanding about how children learn'. The responses from leaders in all-through contexts illustrate a strong focus on developing clarity about how learning happens and the structures that are necessary to support learning.

In one school, differentiation was regarded as being exceptional in primary and is now supporting the secondary phase in improving practice. Transferring excellent practice in planning was a key issue in another school: 'the key to [raising] standards was the push to get secondary to plan in the same detail as primary'. Systems that are possible due to the appointment of shared staff are having an impact on key aspects of teaching and learning.

The employment of a single data manager for another all-through school is having a significant effect on the quality of data provided to teachers and is leading to much improved monitoring and tracking for pupils aged 3-16. In practical terms, this inevitably creates opportunities for better differentiation and greater personalisation. As noted by one headteacher: 'the robustness of tracking in all-through leads easily into regular reviews of pupil progress and, if appropriate, curriculum review'.

In a number of settings, all-through leaders had taken advantage of the proximity of children and young people to match the learning experience of pupils to their learning stage rather than their age. As a unique feature of cross-phase learning models, this has led a number of schools to develop an authentic all-age curriculum.

The use of specialist teachers in all phases was identified by several leaders as an important spur to pupil motivation and success, meaning 'curriculum areas can deliver across all ages'.

At Babington House School, an independent school in Chislehurst, a peer buddy scheme operates across all ages and demonstrates the impact of 'role modelling' in an all-through setting. Pupils in the preparatory school visit their buddies during form time to share information one to one. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 buddy those in Year 2, and Year 3 and 4 pupils buddy those in Year 1. Playground buddies also try to ensure that no child becomes unhappy or isolated during playtime. In the senior school, pupils from Year 10 are buddies to those in Year 7 and they help in a variety of ways, such as helping pupils to feel welcomed and find their way around school, being someone to turn to if difficulties arise either socially or academically and helping with timetable information.

The development of an all-through pedagogy is one of the drivers for leaders of all-through settings. The main opportunities mentioned were as follows:

- The positive impact of transition was seen in all-through schooling as a critical component of the personalisation agenda.
- Personalising the curriculum means children learn at a time when they are ready and not a time prescribed by their birth date.
- Early intervention and tracking were enhanced by the all-through setting.

- It was possible to create common systems of quality assurance, covering pupil assessment, monitoring and tracking and performance management of staff or teams.
- Understanding and establishing an all-through pedagogy, whilst undefined by school leaders, was nonetheless seen to be an essential aspiration for the all-through institution.
- The deployment of teaching staff across phases was seen to benefit learners and create efficiencies.
- Innovative solutions to remove barriers to learning was seen as more likely in the all-through setting because there are no prescribed solutions.
- Bringing together the skills of early years teachers with secondary specialists enabled cohesive curriculum planning aiming to create a seamless curriculum.

This focus on teaching and learning reflects the findings of the Ofsted report [Developing leadership: National Support Schools](#) (Ofsted, 2010), which makes the following observation about schools that:

‘made an explicit link between the effectiveness of leadership and the improvement of teaching and learning. The emphasis on good quality teaching and learning was given the highest priority and was central to the work of leaders at all levels.’

Ofsted, 2010:10

The Bridge Learning Campus in Bristol has a professional development programme that is ongoing, with weekly meetings about learning (called MALs). A MAL is a dedicated 45-minute weekly training slot with one learning agenda item. The importance of MALs is that they focus everyone’s attention on a planned programme of practitioner-led pedagogy. As the programme has developed, the need for a differentiated approach has become apparent and now staff across the campus choose the level of support and development they require for a particular topic. MALs are seen as a crucial element in the continuing improvement of the schools on the campus and the rise in quality of lessons observed. Recent inspection evidence for one part of the campus witnessed 85 per cent of all lessons observed being judged good or outstanding.

Benefits of professional development in an all-through setting

The research showed that senior and middle leaders saw professional development benefits for themselves and their colleagues in the all-through setting. Regardless of initial misgivings, distinct advantages and clearly valued opportunities had emerged:

- Teachers had opportunities to teach out of phase, thus broadening their experience of children’s learning.
- Best practice was shared between phases. Bringing together different groups of practitioners in cross-phase training groups was regarded as a ‘collective opportunity’.
- Cross-phase lesson observation in some settings had ‘brought a different flavour to performance management’.
- Those responsible for systems and process say that systems need to be as appropriate for 3 year olds as for 16 year olds and therefore ‘more robust’. This reflects the general consensus that, because so much is new, innovative solutions are expected and that in itself offers tremendous opportunity to school leaders.

Shared professional development opportunities were seen as beneficial because they influenced leaders from all phases to, in the words of one senior leader:

‘avoid making assumptions about the different phases and the smaller [phase] feeling it is being taken over... enabling primary leaders to comprehend the learning journey and secondary [leaders] the chance to know where they have come from.’

Opportunities were taken to respond positively to challenges presented by designing cross-phase opportunities, enabling staff to get to know and respect each other through:

- shared CPD across all phases
- shadowing colleagues in other phases
- joint planning sessions between phases
- creating cross-phase roles

Leaders interviewed for this research cited dozens of potential opportunities whilst at the same time acknowledging the challenges they faced in the journey to becoming a genuinely all-through context. What was most striking was that the absolute priority in every case was the desire to ‘get things right for the child’.

Challenges

The challenges that all-through leaders attribute to the all-through context centre on establishing their credibility in the minds of others, and moving staff from all phases out of their prevailing culture and into something truly integrated. They also had to deal with the problems presented by transition arrangements for children from a much bigger area than the one covered by the all-through school.

Credibility in an all-through setting

All-through leaders felt challenged by the views of other adults in the school community. They were worried that they had to:

- break down the territorial attitude of some colleagues in respect of different phases
- overcome the mistrust of parents
- deal with the judgements that staff, parents and the community would make

All these concerns were rooted in whether these leaders had sufficient knowledge and understanding of all phases in their schools or academies. This was a distinctive challenge that leaders felt would not be found in single-phase schools. Leaders of all-through settings generally identified credibility as a significant challenge, which, whilst it may only have posed a challenge in the early days of their leadership, underpinned most of the other challenges they identified. Whilst leaders of all-through schools know they must attempt to be reasonably fluent with pedagogy in all phases of learning, they also know that they employ others for their expertise in particular phases or pedagogies. Yet, because of traditional expectations of school leaders in a single-phase setting, there is tension between the knowledge these leaders possess and the credibility they believe this lends them with staff and parents. For some it was necessary to know the detail of all phases, whilst for others knowing the ‘right questions to ask’ was sufficient. The test of credibility was seen in relation to the views and opinions of fellow professionals and parents.

‘Getting it right with parents,’ meant knowing the differing expectations of parents of children across the age range and ensuring that those expectations were met. In some cases, effectively delegating roles such as meeting parents and being present in all parts of the school at appropriate times helped sustain credibility. An interesting perspective from a primary-trained leader was the view that parents needed to be:

‘re-educated to comprehend the fact that primary leaders are equipped with the knowledge-base and leadership skills of a comparable standard to their secondary colleagues.’

Leaders at Serlby Park School, a 3-16 business and enterprise learning community in Nottinghamshire, stressed the importance of establishing credibility at each phase and developing an understanding of the distinctive rhythms and characteristics of phases where they had no previous experience of them. This does not mean that the territorialism often associated with specific phases goes unchallenged. Ways of encouraging credibility include ensuring that senior staff have cross-phase responsibilities, transferring effective systems on a cross-phase basis, and enabling staff, for example newly qualified teachers, to work across phases.

Leading phase-based cultures

The all-through setting brings staff from very different backgrounds together. The challenge for leaders was:

‘encouraging buy-in by engaging staff in decision-making, balanced against ensuring that all decisions focused on all-through impact.’

The key leadership activities for leaders in overcoming this challenge were:

- creating a vision that resonates with all phases and ‘getting everyone on board with it’
- changing mindsets and motivating colleagues
- overcoming the fear of innovation

-
- managing constant change and challenge
 - creating a common pedagogy that builds on the best of all phases

The research raised a number of issues for all-through leaders to resolve: designing staffing structures that discourage territorial behaviours and moving people out of their comfort zone for example. Whilst many leaders didn't want to reinforce phase-restricted behaviours, nor did they want to undermine expertise in a particular phase. Tension remains between benefitting from the latter whilst discouraging the former.

For those in executive leadership positions, there were additional challenges associated with leading heads of individual schools. Trying to balance accountability and autonomy, and knowing when to back off and when to be tenacious were commonly seen as essential features of their leadership.

Transition beyond the all-through setting

Pupil transition, while it is benefited by the all-through culture, is a central issue for leaders of all-through institutions. With rare exceptions, not all children experienced an all-through learning journey. For many all-through schools, only a small proportion of learners started in early years and made the journey through to age 16 or 18. Many inevitably joined the school at age 11 (end of Year 6). The fact is that only a small minority of schools saw all their Year 6 pupils making up more than 80 per cent of their Year 7 roll, and this places transition as a key issue despite the fact that for pupils who do remain within the all-through setting, the traditional transition issues are mitigated. The biggest challenge for leaders, therefore, was in ensuring integration of primary-age children coming from outside the all-through setting.

There was an underlying perception that the quality of integration at Year 7 was the hallmark of a successful all-through school, and recognition that much of the success of an all-through setting rested on an understanding of how children learn on the 2-19 continuum, regardless of where they have their primary experience. Comments about staff having 'the whole picture' and about 'coherence and continuity' and 'continuity and progression' were made frequently in the dialogues with researchers.

Knowledge, skills and behaviours needed by leaders of all-through settings

A minority of all-through leaders suggested the knowledge, skills and behaviours required of all-through leaders were no different from those required in any context but this perhaps reflected the experience of the leaders concerned. The majority, whilst identifying what we might regard as generic leadership skills, knowledge and behaviours, saw these attributes in the new, all-through context. The demands of all-through schooling, illustrated by this research, clearly test established skills and behaviours and most importantly, challenge the knowledge of all-through leaders. It was apparent from the research that the school leaders interviewed had significant knowledge and extensive skills: the challenge was 'adapting skills to a new and wider challenge'.

Skills

Despite the recognition that credibility was closely related to being knowledgeable, most leaders recognised that knowing everything personally was not necessary, while still feeling that the real skill lay in identifying which knowledge is essential and which desirable. The skill of sourcing knowledge from others was seen as critical. The skills identified by all-through leaders were as follows:

- Leaders needed to be secure in what they do know and confident enough to not need to know everything.
- They must manage and develop staff from a wide range of phase-specific backgrounds, which is seen as requiring a mixture of personal and interpersonal skills.
- Modelling effective all-through working included demonstrating:
 - self-knowledge
 - self-management
 - self-confidence

- Emotional intelligence was frequently used to characterise the range of interpersonal skills required of the all-through leader. Other skills cited were:
 - the ability to manage expectations
 - flexibility and perception
 - the ability to influence people or 'take people with you' in order to effect change

Some of the skills identified as necessary to the all-through leader were generic skills:

- designing strategy, which might include finding ways of using the skill and expertise of all phases of the all-through setting
- team-building, which might include finding ways of encouraging cross-phase working
- holding others to account

The scale on which generic skills had to be used was what defined them as all-through skills. The ability to access the different skills of others and adapting existing skills to operate in a more complex environment characterised the range of skills necessary for the leadership of an all-through setting.

New Year 7 pupils integrate effectively with all-through learning at Samworth Enterprise Academy because the learning experience is structured on a primary model, with each class having its own class teacher and teaching assistant. Pupils access specialist teaching in PE, modern foreign languages, creative and performing arts and food technology. Core subjects are also taught by specialist teachers. The model provides greater consistency, maximises personal development support for pupils and provides more opportunities for thematic, skills-based learning while ensuring that progression and access to subject expertise is not compromised. Better outcomes for Key Stage 3 are already evident.

Knowledge

The most significant knowledge identified by all respondents was pedagogy of all phases. Inevitably leaders of all-through contexts are likely to have developed their professional competence in one phase or another. Knowing enough about the less familiar phase was seen to be important not only to their credibility but also to their ability to lead effectively. This was variously described as:

- understanding the phases as a foundation for building the vision that would inspire everyone to get on board
- understanding what learning looks and feels like for learners at different stages in their learning journey to enable the creation of a common pedagogy and ethos

There were suggestions that the leadership of an all-through school or academy is not currently a suitable role for first-time heads. There are still very few practitioners that come with leadership experience in all phases. The notion of home-grown school leaders in innovative settings is not new but the significant demands of the all-through setting make growing leaders in-house imperative. Talent spotting requires a combination of knowledge and skill: experience to identify leadership potential and knowledge to develop it. All-through leaders were able to do this.

The research revealed that some of the leaders of all-through settings had clearly established all-through schools by amalgamating phase-based schools. Their perspective on change management, particularly as it related to changing the attitudes and behaviours of others, was to some extent different from the perspective of those who had taken on the leadership of an established all-through school.

Behaviours

The views of middle and senior leaders in all-through settings suggest that as soon as staff are confident in the ability and credibility of their leader, they will begin to model their behaviours and attitudes. This places quite a lot of pressure on all-through leaders to model appropriate behaviours and attitudes.

A key behaviour is how the all-through leader communicates. As there are perceptions that the different phases have different cultures, effective communication is essential.

It is about more than purely verbal communication; communicating an all-through ethos by modelling appropriate behaviours and attitudes is regarded as vital in conveying messages that resonate across all phases.

At St Mary Magdalene Academy in north London, the SLT has achieved commonality through a robust literacy strategy across Years 7 and 8 which builds on the established practice within the primary years of the academy and also local primary schools. The practice is built on the principle of developing vocabulary, sentence structure and development, and punctuation across all curriculum areas. Information to support this is displayed in all the classrooms, and pupils are informed and knowledgeable about the strategy and how it supports them in developing their literacy skills. There is already clear evidence that this is significantly influencing student outcomes.

There are different attitudes to phase speciality among all-through leaders. The commitment to cross-phase is almost unanimous among heads and principals, whereas commitment to the specialist approach, where it exists, is more likely to be found among senior and middle leaders. This disparity highlights the importance of communicating consistent, accessible and vision-building messages. The reinforcement of those messages is recognised as an ongoing challenge which, because of its importance, becomes an integral aspect of the day-to-day work of all-through leaders. It was referred to variously as, 'being approachable', 'listening', 'giving time to the views of others', 'galvanising people around the vision' and 'constant reiteration' of the big picture.

Self-confident behaviours were seen to be vital to the success of the all-through leader. Having the confidence to trust their professional instincts and 'knowing when to dig in or stand your ground even when you're unsure' or simply 'showing confidence when uncertain' illustrated the need for self-assurance.

The knowledge required to lead an all-age school, the confidence to do so and the significant scale of the change management required of all-through school leaders led to many suggesting that a distinct set of behaviours was required of them:

- Consistently showing commitment to the all-through vision was described as ‘confidence in the vision’ or ‘exemplifying the belief in one school’. Implicitly this meant retaining the big picture in all circumstances.
- Coaching and facilitating the development of others in the organisation might be used in order to encourage appreciation of difference within the organisation or to develop individuals from different parts of the organisation.
- Making decisions that are sensitive to all parts of the organisation was seen as ‘lack of bias’, ‘fairness’, or ‘empathy toward each phase of learning’. Although territoriality might reflect a lack of confidence on the part of some members of the organisation, it was incumbent on leaders to recognise and counter this.

Leaders in all-through settings were almost universally aware that their behaviours had to be seen as overtly valuing all phases of the school and all practitioners within it. On that basis, they suggested, it was much more likely that, over time, a genuine consensus would be formed around a shared vision.

Developing future leaders for all-through settings

The research reveals some important differences between the leadership of a single-phase school and that of an all-through setting. All-through settings are more complex and are developed on the assumption that children will have a more personalised and coherent experience than in single-phase schools. There are distinct opportunities and challenges specific to the all-through setting, and the knowledge, skills and behaviours described by all-through leaders relate directly to the all-through context. How then can the next generation of all-through leaders be developed and who will these leaders be? The research suggests that most leaders of all-through schools are not new to headship, so it seems likely that some of our future all-through leaders are already leading single-phase schools.

Contemporary all-through school leaders are dealing with the reality of sourcing their staff and senior leaders from single-phase schools. Their response is proactive in bringing on the next generation of school leaders. One spoke of:

“being able to see [the] potential in staff across the key stages and empower them to identify, develop and distribute leadership and... prepare new leaders at all levels [who are] capable of extending the all-through vision”.

The research indicated that whatever stage of maturity the organisation had reached, finding people within the organisation with the potential to lead is a priority. Thus leaders of all-through schools talk about having the capacity to grow their own leaders.

There is a wealth of exceptional practice in developing leadership within some of the settings used in the research. The recognition that all-through leaders need to be developed quickly is apparent; the succession planning issues for all-through schools, unless addressed promptly, are likely to be worse than those for other settings. Current all-through leaders are being proactive in preparing the next generation of leaders. They are innovative professionals who have stepped into a new context without any particular training or preparation. Perhaps as a consequence of optimism, tenacity and professionalism, they have developed effective leadership practice.

It would be reasonable to assume that the opportunities they are creating within their own settings are those that they would want to see replicated system-wide. Indeed, these are opportunities that, had they been there for these leaders, would have been welcomed.

There are several approaches being taken to the development of all-through leadership. CPD has a high profile in all-through schools. The nature of the setting means that shared learning is essential and the way this is happening ranges from creating structures in which all staff feel empowered to be part of decision-making to co-constructing higher education modules in all-through leadership for postgraduate study.

One of the schools in this study has developed an extensive training programme for aspiring leaders that operates at three levels. There are programmes for emerging leaders, aspiring middle leaders and aspiring senior leaders. The programme offers shadowing of existing leaders and, through performance management, a guaranteed opportunity to take up a new leadership role that offers career progression. In another context, a bespoke programme for aspiring leaders has been developed in-house and sees those involved taking on cross-phase roles in order to extend their knowledge and understanding of the all-through context.

The structures created to develop leadership potential in all-through settings varied but cross-phase leadership roles were common. Where all-through settings have been created from single-phase schools, the evidence shows that this has been more difficult to achieve but, nonetheless, has developed as a feature of all new posts. The teaching and learning responsibilities (TLR) structure in many settings has enabled posts with significant responsibility for teaching and learning to be filled by aspiring practitioners from all phase backgrounds. A significant number of all-through settings enabled aspiring staff to join SLT meetings on some basis to help them acquire a better understanding of all-through leadership issues.

Wigmore Federation in Herefordshire take PGCE students from Worcester and Bristol universities, but the relationship with Worcester University is cemented by its delivery of modules for a Master's on site to all staff. All staff undertake the coaching and mentoring module, and any member of staff wishing to continue is supported in doing so, emphasising the importance the federation places on high-quality CPD.

Many leaders of all-through settings recognise the generic basis of their skills, but simultaneously regard themselves as fortunate to have had considerable experience prior to their role as leader in an all-through context. The knowledge that they arrive with stands them in good stead to tackle what is, for many, a steep learning curve.

A number of leaders spoke about adopting a 'deliberate policy to grow our own [leaders]' and this took many forms. In one context it was described as 'greenhousing', a process whereby leadership talent was carefully and methodically nurtured in a context where the expectation was that all leaders had to consciously prepare their successors. Some leaders employed mentoring schemes, whilst others had developed a coaching model for aspiring senior leaders, sometimes using current school leaders and in one instance bringing in professional coaching organisations. Investing in potential future leaders was a priority in all the settings visited. An in-house leadership programme featuring internships was a feature of one setting where the executive leadership of the organisation models the distribution of leadership at every level of the organisation. In two settings, leadership development had been taken a stage further with the co-development of Master's programmes with local universities.

A significant proportion of those interviewed felt that all-through settings developed at different rates and that there should be some recognition of the degree of 'all-throughness' that individual settings had achieved. Leaders saw this taking the form of an accreditation programme based on some kind of assessment, suggesting something similar to the Investors in People evaluation of good practice.

Clearly the commitment to the professional development for future all-through leaders demonstrates that due to their role-specific requirements, the all-through model of leadership would benefit from bespoke or additional training and development. The challenges faced by leaders new to the all-through context are, as reported, extensive and although the leaders in this research appeared to have coped with them, better preparation could have made the induction into an all-through context less testing.

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Hadley Learning Community, Telford

Hinde House, Sheffield

Hurst Lodge School, Ascot

Ockbrook School, Derby

Samworth Enterprise Academy, Leicester

Serlby Park, Doncaster

St Mary Magdalene Academy, London

St Matthew Academy, London

Wigmore High School, Leominster

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Triumph Road,
Nottingham NG8 1DH
T 0845 609 0009
F 0115 872 2001
E enquiries@nationalcollege.org.uk
www.nationalcollege.org.uk

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